



December 1, 2004

Former fugitive sentenced to eight years in federal prison for possessing a gun

A federal judge has sentenced **Joseph Benedetti**, of Johnston, to eight years in federal prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm that Rhode Island State Police found in his bedroom dresser in 1998. In November 2003, a jury convicted Benedetti, who had been a fugitive for five years after being indicted on the firearms charge in 1998.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the sentence, which Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres imposed yesterday in U.S. District Court, Providence. Under provisions of federal sentencing guidelines, Judge Torres lengthened Benedetti's sentence because he obstructed justice – by fleeing the jurisdiction, by perjuring himself during a pre-trial hearing, and by encouraging another witness to commit perjury during the trial.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker presented evidence that, in November 1998, Rhode Island State Police detectives executed a search warrant at Benedetti's apartment at 1139 Hartford Avenue. Among the items they seized was a .380 caliber handgun, which was found in a bedroom dresser drawer.

A federal grand jury subsequently charged Benedetti with being a felon in possession of a firearm. Upon learning of the indictment, Benedetti fled Rhode Island and was living under an assumed name in Hallandale, Florida, when Deputy U.S. Marshals arrested him in July 2003.

Benedetti's defense was a claim that the gun belonged to a friend who had left it at Benedetti's apartment. Assistant U.S. Attorney Vilker presented evidence refuting that claim.

Benedetti, 55, has prior convictions for assault and breaking and entering and, as a previously convicted felon, is prohibited from possessing firearms. He has been detained at the Wyatt Federal Detention Center, Central Falls, since deputy U.S. Marshals returned him to Rhode Island last year.

Rhode Island State Police and the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** investigated the case, with assistance from **Johnston Police**. Assistant U.S. Attorney Vilker prosecuted it. Assistant U.S. Attorney Adi Goldstein represented the government at the sentencing.

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